

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for providing communication services, comprising:
 - receiving, via a network, a request from a hearing-impaired party for establishing a communication link to a hearing party;
 - transmitting, via the network, an interface screen to the hearing-impaired party in response to the request, the interface screen identifying a plurality of instant messaging programs and including a selection area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to select an instant messaging program with which to communicate;
 - identifying a communication assistant;
 - forwarding the request to the communication assistant;
 - establishing, by the communication assistant, a communication link to the hearing-impaired party using the instant messaging program selected by the hearing-impaired party;
 - establishing, by the communication assistant, a voice link with the hearing party;
 - receiving, by the communication assistant, voice messages from the hearing party via the voice link;
 - generating instant messages, by the communication assistant, the instant messages corresponding to the voice messages; and
 - transmitting the instant messages to the hearing-impaired party.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - receiving, by the communication assistant, instant messages from the hearing-impaired party; and
 - transmitting, by the communication assistant, voice messages to the hearing party, the voice messages corresponding to the received instant messages.
3. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the request from the hearing-impaired party is received via a packet-switched network from a device executing an instant messaging program.
4. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the request from the hearing-impaired party is received via the Internet.
5. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the interface screen includes a telephone number input area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to input a telephone number for the hearing party.
6. (canceled)
7. (previously presented) The method of claim 5 wherein the interface screen includes a user name area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to input an e-mail address identifying an address to which the communication assistant will send instant messages.

8. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the voice link from the communication assistant to the hearing party comprises a voice over Internet Protocol link.

9. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
establishing a conference call between the hearing-impaired party, the communication assistant and the hearing party, the conference call utilizing voice over Internet Protocol.

10. (currently amended) A system, comprising:
a server configured to:
receive, via a network, a request from a hearing-impaired party for establishing a communication link to a hearing party,
transmit, via the network, an interface screen to a hearing-impaired party in response to the request, the interface screen identifying a plurality of instant messaging programs and allowing the hearing-impaired party to select an instant messaging program with which to communicate,
identify a first communication assistant, and
forward the request; and
a first device associated with the first communication assistant, the first device being configured to:
receive the request from the server,

establish a communication link to the hearing-impaired party using the instant messaging program selected by the hearing-impaired party, and establish a voice link with the hearing party.

11. (previously presented) The system of claim 10, wherein the interface screen includes a first area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to input a telephone number for the hearing party.

12. (canceled)

13. (previously presented) The system of claim 11, wherein the interface screen includes a second area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to input an e-mail address identifying an address to which the first communication assistant will send instant messages.

14. (original) The system of claim 10, wherein the first device comprises a workstation, the first device being further configured to:
receive voice messages from the hearing party via the voice link, and transmit instant messages to the hearing-impaired party, the instant messages being input by the first communication assistant and corresponding to the received voice messages.

15. (original) The system of claim 14, wherein the first device is further configured to:

receive instant messages from the hearing-impaired party, and transmit voice messages to the hearing party, the transmitted voice messages corresponding to the received instant messages.

16. (original) The system of claim 10, wherein the request from the hearing-impaired party is received via a packet-switched network from a device executing an instant messaging program.

17. (original) The system of claim 10, wherein the request from the hearing-impaired party is received via the Internet.

18. (original) The system of claim 10, wherein the first device is further configured to establish the voice link from the first communication assistant to the hearing party using voice over Internet Protocol.

19. (original) The system of claim 10, wherein the first device is further configured to:

establish a conference call between the hearing-impaired party, the first communication assistant and the hearing party, the conference call utilizing voice over Internet Protocol.

20. (previously presented) The system of claim 19, wherein the conference call is configured to link the hearing-impaired party, the first communication assistant and the hearing party in at least one of a hearing carry over environment, a voice carry over environment or a speech-to-speech environment.

21. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a plurality of sequences of instructions, said sequences of instructions including sequences of instructions which, when executed by a processor, cause said processor to:

receive, via a network, a request associated with a hearing-impaired party for establishing a communication link to a hearing party;

transmit, via the network, an interface screen to the hearing-impaired party in response to the request, the interface screen including an input area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to select an instant messaging program from a plurality of instant messaging programs;

establish a communication link to the hearing-impaired party using the instant messaging program selected by the hearing-impaired party via the interface screen; and establish a voice link to the hearing party.

22. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, including instructions for further causing the processor to:

receive voice messages from the hearing party via the voice link; and transmit, in response to received voice messages, instant messages to the hearing-impaired party, the instant messages corresponding to the voice messages.

23. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, including instructions for further causing the processor to:

receive instant messages from the hearing-impaired party; and
display the instant messages.

24. (previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, including instructions for further causing the processor to:

receive voice messages from the hearing party via the voice link;
automatically generate instant messages corresponding to the voice messages;
transmit the instant messages to the hearing-impaired party;
receive instant messages from the hearing-impaired party;
automatically generate voice messages corresponding to the received instant messages; and
transmit the voice messages to the hearing party.

25. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, wherein when establishing a voice link, the instructions cause the processor to:

establish the voice link using voice over Internet Protocol.

26. (previously presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, wherein when establishing a voice link, the instructions further cause the processor to:

establish a conference call between the hearing-impaired party, a communication assistant and the hearing party, the voice link utilizing at least one of the Internet or

the public switched telephone network.

27. (currently amended) A system, comprising:

means for receiving, via a network, a request from a hearing-impaired party for establishing a communication link to a hearing party; and

means for transmitting, via the network, an interface screen to the hearing-impaired party in response to the request, the interface screen including an input area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to input a telephone number for the hearing party and a selection area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to select a text messaging program with which to communicate.

28. (original) The system of claim 27, wherein the interface screen includes a user name area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to input an address to which a communication assistant will send text messages.

29. (original) The system of claim 27, further comprising:

means for identifying a communication assistant to assist the hearing-impaired party; and

means for forwarding the request to the identified communication assistant.

30. (currently amended) A method, comprising:

receiving, via a network, a request from a hearing-impaired party for establishing a communication link to a hearing party; and

transmitting, via the network, an interface screen to the hearing-impaired party in response to the request, the interface screen identifying a plurality of text messaging programs and including a selection area for allowing the hearing-impaired party to select a first text messaging program from the plurality of text messaging programs with which to communicate with a communication assistant.

31. (original) The method of claim 30, further comprising:
 - establishing a communication link from the communication assistant to the hearing-impaired party; and
 - communicating with the hearing-impaired party via instant messages.
32. (original) The method of claim 30, further comprising:
 - establishing a full duplex communication link with the hearing-impaired party; and
 - communicating with the hearing-impaired party over the full duplex communication link using text messages.
33. (previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein the request from the hearing-impaired party is received via a wireless telephone or a personal digital assistant and the interface screen is transmitted to the wireless telephone or the personal digital assistant.
34. (new) The method of claim 1, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

35. (new) The method of claim 30, wherein the network comprises the Internet.